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SAYAT-NOVA'S OEUVRE IN THE LIGHT OF INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION BY V. BRYUSOV

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Abstract: Each national literature is a part of national history. It presents the features of the national culture and the people who live and develop in specific cultural and traditional conditions. Each nation has its unique genius that sings the national beauty. Armenian ashug Sayat'-Nova's creativity has had a significant influence on Armenian literature. Sayat'-Nova, as a national poet, had created poetry with its genre subdivisions. We can consider such categories as spiritual, patriotic poetry, glamorous social poetry, and folk-gusan songs. The present research has been carried out along the lines of Sayat'-Nova's verbal creativity through the interpretive prism of theorists and literary critics with special reference to Valeri Brusov, who highlighted the exclusive richness of Sayat'-Nova's artistic devices, the peculiar features of his literary genre, style, and language. The article focused on the relevance of Russian-Armenian literary relations, which became particularly crucial with the publication of Valeri Brusov's anthology "Poetry of Armenia" in 1916. The outstanding Russian writer, critic, and translator has highly appreciated the exceptional richness of Armenian literature and interpreted each piece of verbal creativity with great accuracy. His opinion is that Sayat'-Nova name deserves to be a part of world literature. Armenian ashug has to stand next to the honored names and glorified works of Western literature.
Keywords: Russian-Armenian literary relations, Valeri Brusov, anthology "Poetry of Armenia," Sayat'-Nova, ashugh, Armenian literature, translation, critical interpretation.
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ТВОРЧЕСТВО САЯТ-НОВЫ В СВЕТЕ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ И ПЕРЕВОДА В. БРЮСОВА

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Аннотация: Каждая национальная литература является частью национальной истории. В ней представлены особенности национальной культуры и народа, жившего и развивавшегося в специфических культурно-традиционных условиях. У каждого народа есть свой гений, воспевший национальную красоту. Творчество армянского ашуга Саят-Нова оказало значительное влияние на армянскую литературу. Саят-Нова как народный поэт создал поэзию с ее жанровыми подразделениями. Мы можем рассматривать такие категории, как религиозно-патриотическая поэзия, гламурная социальная поэзия и народно-гусанские песни. Настоящее исследование проведено в русле словесного творчества Саят-Нова сквозь интерпретационную призму теоретиков и литературоведов с особым обращением к Валерию Брюсову, подчеркнувшему исключительное богатство художественных приемов Саят-Нова, особенности его литературного жанра, стиля и языка. В статье акцентируется внимание на актуальности русско-армянских литературных связей, которые приобрели особую остроту с изданием в 1916 г. сборника Валерия Брюсова «Поэзия Армении». Выдающийся русский писатель, критик и переводчик высоко оценил исключительное богатство армянской литературы и интерпретировал каждое произведение словесного творчества с большой точностью. По его мнению, имя Саят-Нова по праву должно войти в мировую литературу. Армянский ашуг должен стоять рядом с почитаемыми именами и прославленными произведениями западной литературы.

Ключевые слова: Российско-армянские литературные связи, Валерий Брюсов, антология «Поэзия Армении», Саят-Нова, ашух, армянская литература, перевод, критическая интерпретация.

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Sayat'-Nova's creativity had significant and profound roots in Armenian literature [1], as well as its unique place in the cultural-traditional heritage, aesthetics, and literary values of world literature [2]. In this connection, Sayat'-Nova's life and creativity made a unique impact not only on the Armenian literary circles but also on Russian and Western experts of verbal creativity, who appreciated and evaluated the Armenian writer and initiated the translation of its best pieces of verbal creativity into Russian, English and other languages.

According to Russian theorists [3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8] the parallel between the original and the translation can be established not only by conveying the form and the content but also by portraying the impressionistic feelings. Both the reader of the original and the reader of the translation should understand the internal implicit context of the work, its atmosphere, and spirit; in other words, the essence of the original and its impact on the reader's lifestyle. Consequently, the quality of translations should be judged not so much by the number of successfully equivalent transpositions of the original, but how the translators managed to achieve the unity of content and form, objective and subjective and to convey the gist of the utterance. Not less important is the lingo-cultural communication of people and their mutual relations in the spheres of art and literature.

Being a complex mental procedure, the translation process presupposes multifaceted strategies involving the linguistic and extra-linguistic awareness of the practitioner, profound contextual interpretative capacity and the possibility of interconnecting two cultures: the source culture and the target culture [9; 10; 11; 12].

The research aims to shed light on some aspects of V. Brusov's critical interpretations and translation mechanisms of the Armenian ashugh — Sayat'-No-

va's artistic lyrics, which took their honorable place in the anthology. Although many theorists discussed the essence of Sayat'-Nova's valuable artifacts, there is still a necessity to outline a special theoretical and practical framework in this sphere.

In this vein, the following objectives are set up:

- To underline the importance of Russian-Armenian cultural connections.
- To illustrate Sayat'-Nova's literary activity within the framework of Valeri Brusov's interpretation and draw parallels with other theorists.
- To analyze V. Brusov's translation mechanisms of culturally-marked units and expressions which will open new vistas for equivalent and adequate translation.
- To emphasize the relevance of Sayat'-Nova Studies in Armenian and World literary circles as a cultural heritage.

The comprehensive study of the fundamental principles and mechanisms of the art of literary interpretation and translation of Armenian literary works leads to the further development of the philological discipline, cross-cultural communication, philosophical literature, and literary relationships. The research materials were the Russian anthologies of Armenian poetry done by Russian Armenist, translator, and writer V. Brusov.

The research illustrates a detailed account of methodological treatment given to the data collected for the study, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The qualitative research aims at revealing the extra-linguistic perspectives and factors of Sayat-Nova's era of activity and lifestyle: a particular social-political situation, historical events, communicative role or interaction by comparing, contrasting, cataloguing, and classifying the subject under study, seeking to comprehend the genre and epoch of the time. On the other hand, the quantitative method attempts to explain Sayat-Nova's artistic creativity by collecting data and analyzing it through the light of proficient experts' and theorists' interpretations. Consequently, it has a solid background for objective conclusion, which permits the researcher to predict outcomes.

Sayat-Nova

The Armenian literature of the 17^{th}–18^{th} centuries was abundant with impeccable literary gems [13], the predominant of which was poetry with its genre

subdivisions like: religious patriotic poetry, glamorous social poetry, and folk gusan songs [1; 15; 16]. The main types of folk (gusan — գուսան) songs were ashugh poetry. Ashughs were common people who wrote the lyrics for folk (gusan) songs, composed the music, and performed them in front of the public on folk holidays, weddings, ashugh competitions, etc. Ashugh poetry was especially the beloved genre of the common people, as it illustrated the human worldview and underlined the aesthetic taste of Armenian people. One of the famous Armenian ashughs of the time — Sayat'-Nova (Ill. 1) lived in the 18th century and wrote his lyrics simultaneously in three languages (Armenian, Georgian, and Turkish), which reflected the poet's humanism, cosmopolitan thinking, and artistic creativity. Sayat'-Nova was evaluated not only in Armenian society, but also in Georgia and the whole of Transcaucasus: he was chosen as the court poet of King Heraclius II. Sayat'-Nova preserved the valuable songs in his own manuscript named Davtar (Դավթար), which nowadays is kept in the National Museum of Literature and Art in Yerevan, Armenia [16; 17].



Illustration 1 — Sayat'-Nova: Rachya Ruhkyan, National Gallery of Armenia

Sayat'-Nova's poetic creativity was fundamental for the further development of the Armenian poetic genre, which organically combined the elements of folklore, church hymns, medieval Armenian songs, and folk-gusan lyrics, as well as the poetry of the Eastern people. Sayat'-Nova's poetry responded to the ques-

tions of both the intelligentsia and the common people and its sociopsychological, moral, and religious concerns. The characteristic feature of Sayat'-Nova songs is philanthropy. The theme of his songs revolved around love, its sweet sufferings, spiritual sensitivity, and passion. In his poetry woman had a divine image, high dignity, and an amazing charm and beauty (Ill. 2).



Illustration 2 — Grigor Sharbabchyan, National Gallery of Armenia

According to literary theorists, Sayat'-Nova embraced the scope of multilingual composition thus expanding the geographical area of Armenian ashugh fame from Constantinople to the Armenian Plateau, then to Tiflis, Isfahan, and its surrounding Armenian communities [16].

In Sayat'-Nova's poems, the feeling of love is associated with the sun, moon, stars, flowers, and precious stones, which contributes to a deeper manifestation of the poet's feelings. However, in his poems, the feeling of love is described not only in joyful colors and positive overtones, but there is a profound human suffering, sometimes with a vivid expression of sorrow and anxiety (Ill. 3).

Naturally, Sayat'-Nova's touching songs were translated in different languages and one of the first translations was done in 1851, when Iakov Polonskii with the help and assistance of Georg Akhverdyan translated some of ashugh's songs into Russian.

The most famous Russian translator of Sayat'-Nova's melodious songs was undoubtedly Valeri Brusov (Ill. 4). In his valuable and comprehensive anthology *Armenian Poetry from the Most Ancient Time to Our Days* published in Moscow, 1916, V. Brusov illustrated Sayat'-Nova's artistic creativity and translated twelve songs [18; 19].



Illustration 3 — Eduard Isabekyan, 1964; Armenia

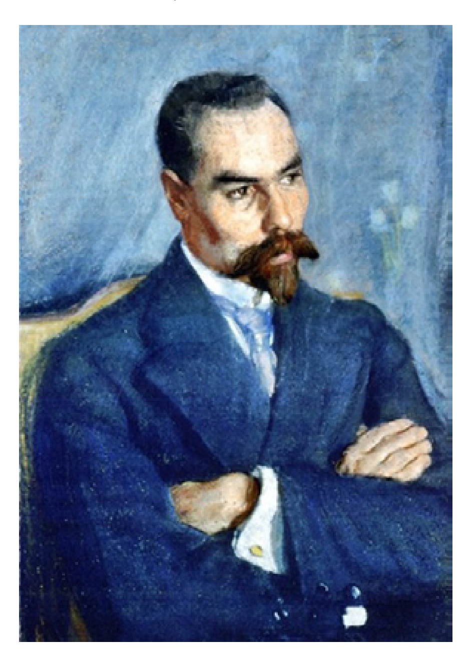


Illustration 4 — Portrait of V.Ya. Brusov: S.V. Malyutin, 1913; State Literary Museum, Moscow

In the constellation of Armenian ashugs, Sayat-Nova, a poet of the 18^{th} century occupied its unique place. V. Brusov evaluated him as majestic and diverse, sensitive in Tyutchev's way, passionate as Musset. Russian theorist and poet considered Sayat'-Nova as one of those "first-class" poets who, by the power of their genius, ceased to be the property of a separate nation, but became the favorite of all nations. The name of Sayat'-Nova can rightfully stand next to the honored names and glorified creations of Western literatures [20] (Ill. 5).

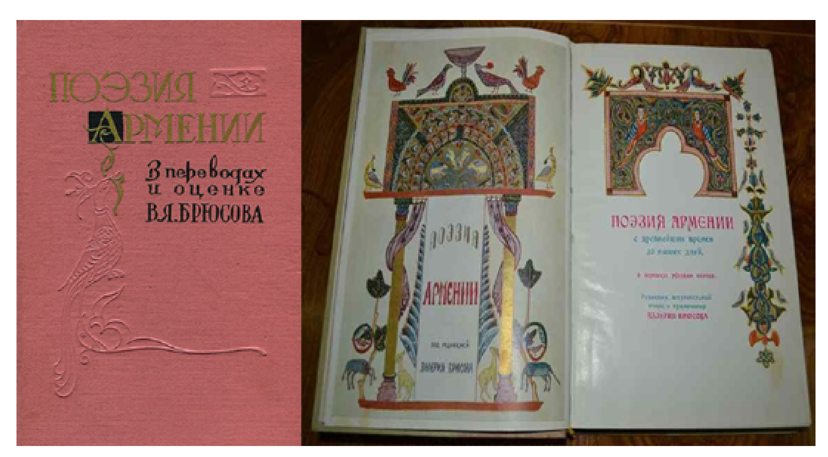


Illustration 5 — Edition of 1916, Poetry of Armenia, V.Ya. Brusov

Sayat'-Nova is the pseudonym of the poet. The father sent his little son to study the craft of a weaver, but from an early age the boy dreamed of becoming an ashugh: in his free time, he admired and listened to singers' competitions and learned to play different musical instruments, as *kamancha*, *chongur* and *tar*.

For some time, like his famous ancestor Nagharsh Hovnatan, Sayat-Nova served in the palace of King Heraclius II of Georgia. Later, he left a brilliant life at court and entered the monastery, took the holy orders, and became a married parish priest of Surb Nishana, in Agbad. This decision had multiple interpretations among historians and literary critics, still all the evidence came to prove that the event was associated with the poet's connection with the church and his faith in Christianity.

But even behind the monastery walls, Father Stepanos (Sayat-Nova) continued to write his melodic poetry and was inspired by public ashugh competitions. There is even a widespread assumption that he sometimes dressed in the

clothes of ashugh, secretly left the monastery, made his way towards Tiflis, and transferred his unique masterpieces to the people.

One cannot but observe that Sayat'-Nova's songs sometimes illustrate autobiographical nuances and one of the most striking examples is ashugh's reference to his parents and nationality: like in the songs number 65 and 69 [21]. The songs shed light on Sayat'-Nova's nationality and parents' origin by emphasizing that his native place was Tiflis (Georgia), his mother was from Havlabar (Armenian Havlabar), which even nowadays is the name of the major Armenian residential area in Tiflis and his father was from Aleppo, his religion is Christianity and he is Armenian.

Sayat'-Nova was in Tiflis on the day when the city was besieged by Persians. He, together with a crowd of people, prayed on his knees in the temple. The Persians demanded that everyone leave the church and convert the religion, but Sayat'-Nova answered with one verse which was illustrated both by V. Brusov and Ch. Dowsett, like:

Изъ храма, нѣтъ! не выйду я, не отрекусь я отъ Христа! [22]

I shall not leave the Church!
I shall not turn away from Jesus! [23]

A thorough analysis of Sayat'-Nova's songs reveals also some biblical allusions and quotations and interestingly these Christian allusions are not illustrated only in the Armenian language. Hence, in th no. 84 song Sayat'-Nova utters: *Whoever does not say "Jesus is God" / Even if his tongue gets tied, he would not repent.*

He was martyred and a marble monument was erected in this place, on which the dates of Sayat'-Nova's birth and death are carved.

Sayat'-Nova's Songs Translation

One cannot but observe that historical and cultural relations between people are multi-layered, full of fascinating events, and abundant with valuable historical and philological materials. In this connection, the process of translation is pivotal for bridging the gap between cultures and traditions. Any piece of verbal creativity is culture-oriented, which intertwines the identity of the nation, its spiritual values, and cognitive procedures. Of course, translation plays a key role in

popularization of the nation’s literary treasury and Sayat’-Nova’s melodic songs are no exception. One of the prominent Russian translations of Sayat’-Nova’s songs is the great Russian poet of the 19th–20th centuries V. Brusov’s translations, which were reflected in a unique anthology of Poetry of Armenia thus initiating the dynamic cultural relations between Russia and Armenia. Thanks to laborious and faithful work and of utmost devotion V. Brusov comprehensively and objectively illustrated Armenian poetry of all times to the Russian-speaking audience, which was highly appreciated by literary critics, poets, and aristocracy.

It was M. Gorki who recommended V. Brusov for originating and supervising the committee for translation of the Armenian poetry, as V. Brusov’s translations were highly appreciated and famous in Russian society. He translated the works of Virgil, Dante, O. Wilde, and other classics.

By observing the Russian translations of Sayat’-Nova’s songs, one cannot but feel the style and language of genius, who transmitted Sayat’-Nova’s beautiful songs with the utmost care and accuracy. Let’s introduce a couple of fragments of the original and Russian translation.

The first is the extract from the poem “I Will not Let Out a Sigh in My Life”:

Լիզուտ շաքար, պռոշըտ ղանդ,
Ակռեքըտ մարքրիտ ալմաս է
Օսկու մեչըն մինա արած, աչկիրըտ
Ակնակապ թաս է:
Պատվական անգին ջավայիր,
լալ-Բադեշխան իս ինձ ամա...

Язык твой — сахар, мед — уста; а зубы —
жемчуг и алмаз;
Твой взор, — эмалевый сосуд, где
жемчуг, изумруд, топаз.
Ты — бриллиант! Бесценный лал
Индийских стран ты для меня!.. (song 1)

The second fragment is from the poem “Kamancha”:

Ամեն սազի մեչըն գոված դուն թամամ
տասն իս, քամանչա.
Նաքազ մարթ քիզ կանա տեսնի, դուն
նըրա պասն իս, քամանչա
Ղաստ արա՝ Էլ լավ օրերուն Էգիվըն
հասնիս քամանչա.

Из всех людьми хваленных лир полней
звучишь ты, каманча!
Кто низок, не иди на пир: пред ним
молчишь ты, каманча!
Но к высшему стремись: весь мир всех
покоришь ты, каманча!

The comparative analysis of the original and translations has shown the dialectical unity of the usage of domestication and foreignization mechanisms to provide both the scientific and aesthetic approach to the utterance abundant with rhythmic organization, poetic image and cultural-traditional atmosphere. In the first extract Brusov preserved the rhythmical form and the poetic meaning of the song, where Sayat'-Nova elegantly compared the inner and outer beauty of his beloved woman: her manners and speech with sugar and honey, the teeth with pearl and brilliant, her gaze is like a unique jar decorated with precious stones from India. Though Sayat'-Nova's songs predominantly devoted to the description of his beloved's physical beauty and appearance, elegance, etc., he praised the worldwide concept of "beauty" and "aesthetics."

The Russian translation of the second song differs from its special rhythm flavoured with repetition of the transliterated culturally-marked unit — kamancha, the musical instrument.

Admiring the lyrics of the poet, Valeri Brusov emphasized that Sayat'-Nova managed to illustrate an inexhaustible variety of overtones in his songs. Almost everywhere the poet speaks about love, but how colorful its shades are in various poems, all these transitions from quiet tenderness to fiery passion, from despair to delight, from self-doubt to the proud self-awareness of the artist. Truly, Sayat-Nova can be called a "poet of shades." At the same time, how sharp, deep and juicy are the shades of Sayat'-Nova's songs flavoured with sweet charm and

painted with a thin and delicate brush [20].

Lexical borrowings of the original entered the Russian verse by transliteration, thereby emphasizing the national identity of the original. To reproduce the rich rhyming of ashugh songs, their charming melodiousness, V. Brusov chose the most significant, sonorous words, like քամանչա — каманча, նաբաթ — набать, սուսամբար — сусамбарь, so on.

It is worth mentioning that Sayat'-Nova's songs are abundant with cross-traditional intertextuality, with special reference to Eastern historical characters, legendary images, etc. For example:

Привѣтъ! ведь ты сильна, какъ тотъ ***Ростомъ, сынъ Зала****! — дочь царя?*

Or another fragment:

Съ чьмъ, милая, сравню тебя? — Все, все исчерпано давно.
Конь-Рашъ *изъ огненныхъ зыбей, степная лань ты для меня!* [23]

In this connection it is pivotal to underline a British Armenist Charles Dowsett's achievements in Sayat'-Nova Studies (*Sayat'-Nova: An 18th-century Troubadour,* a Biographical and Literary Study, by Charles Dowsett, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium,* vol. 561) whose comprehensive scientific study is enormous. Embarking into laborious research on documentary facts, Ch. Dowsett carried out the profound historical-philological survey in the field and translated some Sayat'-Nova's songs. Due to the linguist's survey Sayat'-Nova's songs, illustrated in three languages, are like "cultural schizophrenia," but not in a pathological nature [23]. In other words, the songs are the miniature picture of the Caucasus lifestyle flavoured with culturally-marked units. For examples:

I am the jewel, worthy of a king's crown.
Like ***Shirin****, I am the beloved of* ***Ferhad****.*
From the very first I am the beloved of Sayat-Nova.
What you say is a different remedy [23].

Even the emperor (of Persia) did not arrange ***for Rustam son of Zal***
Such a betrothal and wedding for his own daughter, page 79.

In the first fragment, Sayat'-Nova illustrated the traditional folk story circle about "Khosrov and Shirin" and "Fehrad and Shirin." It was historian Sebeos, who first introduced faithful information about the Persian king Khosrov and his beautiful Armenian wife Shirin, a devoted Christian queen. If the history of Khosrov and Shirin is based on more historical and factual material, then Ferhad and Shirin's narrative has a folk oral tradition. Undoubtedly, the plot of the tragic love always attracts the reader's attention. Legends and many conversations have been woven about Fehrad and Shirin, which have bright and colorful nuances and overtones. In the passage, Sayat'-Nova made a parallel between his and Ferhad's love afflictions and unhappy ending. Alongside with analytical-literary interpretations, Ch. Dowsett translated some extracts from Sayat'-Nova's songs. On the one hand, the translator focuses on faithful translation procedures, on the other hand, he employs the method of domestication to make the ashugh's message more accessible to the reader and to maintain the naturalness of the translation, in a language perceptible to the English-speaking reader.

The intertextuality was organically introduced into the creative culture of the troubadour, giving a unique shine and charm, revealing the eternal fire of Sayat'-Nova's love. Intertextuality transfers original impulses to the context, revealing the creator's allegorical, inward message.

With great hope for the Armenian future prosperity and development, Brusov wrote his famous poems and creative works, like «К Армении» (1915) (Towards Armenia), «К армяном» (1916) (Towards Armenians), «Тигран Великий» (Tigran the Great), etc., where he praised the endurance, the will and the courage of the Armenian people despite the tragedy and cataclysmic periods in the history and soon the Armenians would overcome the disaster with the act of bravery.

Что бурю вновь преодолев
Звездой ты выйдешь из тумана
Для новых подвигов созрев.
«К армянам» (1916)

V. Brusov's lectures on Armenian Literature and Studies were essential for enhancing Russian-Armenian cultural, social, and political relations. He had warm connections with Armenian literary society and intelligentsia in Trans-

caucasia. He got acquainted with various Armenian authors, mainly Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, Felix Bakhchinyan, Alexander Shirvanzade, Srbuhi Lisitsyan, Derenik Demirchyan, and others.

Results and Discussion

One cannot fail to observe that Armenia is perceived as a quintessential bridge between East and West not only in the socio-cultural sphere, but also in historical and geopolitical order. Naturally the 18th-century Armenian ashugh Sayat'-Nova's artistic creativity embodies the whole palette of lingo-cultural peculiarities. Even nowadays the interpretation of Sayat'-Nova's style and language, rhythmical music genre, and his manner of musical instruments [24; 25] performance is on the agenda of literary and musical critics. In this vein, Sayat'-Nova's impeccable lyrics composed of different languages prove the unprecedented phenomenon — the universal singularity of his talent in creating rhythmic poetry gems and melodious music.

Dwelling upon further observation that the theorists do not doubt that Sayat'-Nova was not an average Provencal troubadour since he was an in-depth intellectual with elevated literary language and style. That was the reason that his masterpieces were close to an elite, well-educated readership and intelligentsia. Nowadays, his creative art and emotional melody are highly evaluated and quoted in different occasions [26].

The Armenian ashugh poetry reached its Golden Age thanks to Sayat-Nova, who had the power of penetrating the human souls through moral-philosophical and high humanitarian ideas. This fact was not neglected by Russian famous writer Valeri Brusov. His creation of The Armenian Poetry anthology accompanied with comprehensive critical analysis and the translation of Armenian poets, including Sayat'-Nova's lyrics, was a gigantic literary treasure. The anthology deepened and strengthened the intercultural relations between Russia and Armenia in the field of popularization and dissemination of Armenian and naturally Sayat'-Nova's literary heritage.

The analysis of Sayat'-Nova's poetry texture revealed the complex intertwinement of rhetorical, philosophical, and religious utterances flavored with unique language forms, stylistic devices and melodic overtones which make it difficult and challenging for translators. Researchers underlined that translation is an indispensible part of literary criticism [27; 28]. Embarked into the laborious

procedure of translation V. Brusov proved his exclusivity in this field and illustrated proficient and unrepeatable mechanisms.

Conclusions

Hence the present miniature study leads to the following conclusion:

- Sayat'-Nova's artistic creativity is highly evaluated by Russian and Western literary critics and is considered an indispensable part of world literature and aesthetics. Armenian literature attained significant achievements due to Valeri Brusov's Russian translations and literary evaluations which initiated the process of strengthening and enriching Russian-Armenian relationships.
- Sayat'-Nova's poetry passed the route of "Renascence" through Valeri Brusov's translations thus creating the dignified "afterlife" of ashugh's verbal creativity.
- Sayat'-Nova's talent was exceptional as he created his songs in three different languages belonging to different families: Armenian — Indo-European, Georgian — Kartvelian, and Turkish — Turkic. His songs remain as literary artifacts condensed with spirituality and wisdom and still need to be on the agenda of theorists and experts.
- Sayat'-Nova's songs are abundant with ethnographic realia referring to art and music, intertextuality, connotations, stylistic devices and rhythmical overtones, biblical and literary allusions which undoubtedly represent the cultural-traditional richness of the time. In this vein, V. Brusov proficiently created the dialectical unity of the translational mechanisms — local and foreign — to illustrate Sayat'-Nova's exceptional literary heritage.

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